

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education
From: Don Wotruba, Deputy Director
Date: October 9, 2013
RE: Testimony on the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) report

The Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) supports moving forward with educator evaluation legislation just as we supported the original changes to the school code in this area. Our overriding interest as this issue is considered is allowing the greatest amount of local flexibility possible.

The first thing that needs to be addressed yet this fall, is an amendment to the school code that deletes or moves the requirement that school district evaluations for 2013-2014 include the state's growth model. As you all know, that is currently not in place and will not likely be in place until after the first of the year. Our members are very concerned with being considered in violation of state law even though it is not within their power to be able to change the situation.

As we have reviewed the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) report, we do have a few comments. Some that fit very nicely with the recommendations of the report and some that do not.

MASB has no issue with the four models chosen for teacher evaluation; however, we do not believe there needs to be a state "endorsed" model. The state could move forward with the RFP process to set a funding level for state reimbursement and still not pick any specific model. There seems to be no benefit to choosing one model over another and some labor attorneys in our state have brought up concerns with naming one while still allowing the others to be chosen.

MASB would like to see expanded opportunities to adopt alternative models. Many districts currently are operating with evaluation models they believe are quite effective and would like an opportunity to have those models approved. If the Legislature would set certain criteria in statute that would need to be included in a model, and if the districts met these criteria, their model would be approved. This would make much more sense than having some state entity trying to review the numerous applications that would come in.

For any model that is chosen, whether a state or local one, training of staff is absolutely imperative. Much has been made of possible costs to the state for training and it still seems unclear. However, even if the training cost was near \$100 million, we would only ask you: isn't \$60 out of the \$7,000+ per pupil allotment a reasonable amount to insure that our students' teachers are being properly evaluated, assisted where needed or counseled out of a career because of poor performance?

Another training component that is not being talked about is the needed training for board members to evaluate superintendents. Next to hiring the superintendent, evaluating that individual is one of the most important functions of a board. Board members are laypeople that likely have never evaluated any person in their lives and we now ask them to evaluate someone that they see likely one or two times per month. Clearly they have the capacity to do so, the will to do so and, now that we have rigorous evaluation models, they need the training to do so. Even if a board adopts a local superintendent evaluation tool, they will likely need training for that too.

MASB has supported state mandated board training for a number of years to raise the level of knowledge of board members around the state. We have heard the need for it from the Governor's work group on school district finance, and now we face it with evaluation. We would argue it is time to move this idea forward in the current legislative session and address both of these needs.

MASB also would ask that as you approve administrator evaluation tools that the flexibility is inherent in the system to differentiate between principal and superintendent evaluations as they clearly have different responsibilities.

The last item that we will mention is one that we firmly disagree with the MCEE recommendations on. The report recommends an appeals process for teacher evaluation and MASB believes this would turn the clock back 30+ years. We used to have local board hearings before an employee moved through the tenure hearing process. This was done away with to reduce costs and streamline the process decades ago; three years ago this Legislature made additional changes to make the process even more efficient. To create a new appeals process is not needed. It will be burdensome, costly and a duplication of the current tenure hearing process.

The current school code has moved schools forward as it relates to the quality of educator evaluation and the next steps should further assist that process. We do not want legislation to make it more cumbersome, more restrictive or more costly. We believe this legislation can be written and implemented without having those negative consequences.